

A Migratory Travel Towards Amitav Ghosh's Diasporic Scenario In "The Glass Palace"

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Abstract

Stipulating a broader socio-cultural shift from pure origins to mixed norms in the adoptive country, a person, a community, or a group of people move from their native place to a foreign land, a phenomenon known as Diasporic literature. In postcolonial literature, it takes the lion's share, and as a result of this transition, Diaspora communities are unable to maintain their cultural identities, causing them to deal with feelings of alienation, nostalgia, and yearning. When people cross the divide into a hybrid setting, they embrace multiculturalism or suffer from chronic trauma. For example, the hybrid method creates a space for cross-cultural dialogue, allowing hybrid businesses to participate in a dialectic not solely centred on cultural domination or identity. They create network visions and ancient reminiscent variations that deliver narrative expression to the minority locations they inhabit, using the fragmented subculture from which they emerge to the out of doors of the inside: the component in the whole. As a result, migrant metaphors and migratory landscapes have been at the crux of the diaspora and serve as milestones to better understand the displaced, their suffering, and their continual wish to return home. It is necessary to raise the voices of those who are socially, politically, and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure. Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* depicts three generations of dispersed Indians, illustrating the trauma and alienation of the dispersed Indians, as well as their fantasies of returning home. This article investigates the process of dispersed Indians' identity construction and positioning, focusing on their condition as shown in the novel. This article also explores Ghosh's images of dispersed Indians via the lens of certain diasporic narratives.

Keywords: Exile, Dispersion, Rebellion, Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Dispersed People's Excruciating pain

Introduction

Alienation is a mode of experience in which a person perceives himself as an alien. He's become distant from himself if that's a word. He does not see himself as the centre of his universe or as the author of his own actions. The alienated individual is as out of touch with himself as he is with anyone else. He, like the others, is experienced in the same way that things are experienced: through the senses and common sense, but without being productively tied to oneself and the world outside. (Fromm 177)

In the new world, the dispersed had established their own communities and attempted to integrate or live in harmony with the host community. Despite having made a home in the host countries, most felt compelled to return to their homeland. The desire to return home stems primarily from a sense of loss and alienation they felt throughout their exile and displacement. The estrangement they felt due to the dislocation compelled them to look for the source of their origin: as a result, they desired to study their identities on the way home with the ultimate goal of understanding their roots and origins.

The dual or paradoxical aspect of diasporic awareness is moulded by multilocality and is trapped between 'here' and 'there' or between those who share roots.

Diasporic persons' awareness and identity may be centred on their attachment to ethnic symbols, and they may continue to feel emotionally invested in their 'homeland.' (Agnew 14).

Dissension, discrimination, alienation, and humiliation were typical sensations among those uprooted and displaced from their native homes. Their love for home and curiosity about its culture, language, traditions, and religions are limited to diasporic awareness, primarily concerned with the individual's or community's loyalty to the homeland. The Greeks developed "diaspora" to indicate triumphalist migration or colonisation. The phrase "diaspora" originated from a Greek word that initially meant "sowing of seeds" and was later implemented by Greek colonisation across the Mediterranean, consistent with Robin Cohen. The period's authentic meaning changed into "voluntary migration." However, until currently, massive actions of humans, whether or not as a result of new violence or as a voluntary migration from 0.33-global nations to attractive city centres, have blurred the period's vital meaning.

The phrase "changed" is employed in the Bible to describe what the Lord could do if someone omitted the celestial commands. "Galuth" became the Hebrew cognate, signified "exile" to begin with the spread of Jews out of Palestine following the Babylonian émigré. However, it ultimately grew to include people who had relocated far from their native countries. On the other hand, the new diasporic works include celebrations of diversity and globalization and challenges to the significance of borders and national governments. The diaspora communities, according to Safran, have the following features:

- The diaspora communities or their prototypes have been disseminated from a single "central" area to more "peripheral" or "foreign" locations.
- These communities have a vision, shared memory, or delusion of their ancestral homeland, including its geographical area and triumphs.
- These communities agree that they are no longer well-known with the aid of using their host society and might by no means be because they experienced and distanced from it.
- They take into account their ancestral kingdom to be their perfect natural home, an area wherein they or their descendants would (or need to) go back if the situation had been
- They agree that everybody needs to work together to keep and rebuild their ancestral kingdom and maintain its protection and opulence.
- They maintain a personal or vicarious connection to that homeland, and the existence of such a connection substantially impacts their ethnic-communal consciousness and cohesiveness.

On the other side, Robert Cohen proposed criteria that focused on features other than the communities tied to their homeland. Cohen emphasizes that a Diaspora community must meet the proceeding prerequisites:

- The scattering of the communities must have been influenced by a distressing occurrence, the hunt for a vocation or employment, and imperial ambitions.
- An obligation to the motherland's protection, repair, protection, affluence, and creation.
- The community has built a strong cohesion and empathy with other group members in the host country over time.
- When there is a tolerance for pluralism, there is a potential for contribution to the host country.

These two thinkers agree that physical separation from one's ancestral origins causes a slew of socio-psychological issues, but they also believe in empathy for one another. The concept of home continually forms a part of their unconscious, making brief appearances now and then. Panic, nausea, frenzy, violence, and nostalgia are common themes in diaspora literature. Alienation, identity, hybridity, and cross-culturalism are all common themes. As a result, we rely on theory, the body of ideas, and literature research tools to define these human experiences. Cultural identity, alienation, and hybridity are crucial diasporic notions that help us comprehend the diasporic experience more broadly. Because diaspora literature is linked to various "homeland" memories, it provides a virtual home.

In the classic novel, *The Glass Palace*, Amitav Ghosh explores Diaspora and dislocation and exile to and from India, Burma, and Malaya as central themes. Lower Burma and the Malaya peninsula were known as the "golden regions" among the seafaring people of India's east coast, and it appears that Indians have been conducting regular mercantile trade with these countries from at least the sixth century. However, the migration of Indian people during British colonial authority in Burma and Malaya was substantially different from other flows in history. During the British colonial administration, many Indians migrated to Burma.

The Indian Diaspora in Burma resulted from people from India being dislocated: those who went to Burma as indentured labourers and those who went to Burma as businessmen, lumber merchants, and colonial British Raj petty officials. It is reported that the British moved nearly as many Indians as Burmese to Rangoon. The Indian population in Burma at the time was highly powerful, and they created a strong bond among themselves. Indentured workers from diasporic Indian groups also played a crucial portion in the community's operations in Burma. In this regard, we might contemplate Mcleod's remarks:

Can new homes be found in the host country if visualising home causes fragmentation, discontinuity, and displacement for the migrant? Migrants inevitably become involved in settling in a new location when they migrate from one country to another. This can exacerbate how people's perceptions of home are skewed. Migrants sometimes bring baggage when they move to a new location, both in the physical sense of items and in the less tangible sense of ideas, traditions, conventions, behaviours, and values. This can have ramifications for how others may or may not make migrants feel "at home" when they arrive in a new location (211-212).

Burma was a golden place of opportunity for Bengalis and other Indians looking for a better life. Bengalis and other Indians controlled the business of several of Burma's most prominent cities. These Indian diasporic populations, indentured labourers, timber merchants, British Raj petty officials, and small business owners, established a second home in Burma and lived close to Burmese communities. The majority of the dispersed Indians moved to Burma barefoot in search of their fortune and progressively improved their lot: however, our standards are a little more liberal here in

Burma. Indians are among the city's wealthiest residents, and most of them started with nothing more than a bundle of clothes and a tin box. (Ghosh135)

There are Indian diasporic populations in Malaya, just as dispersed Indian groups in Burma. The British transported them from India under the indenture system based on a contract. Thousands of Indians were also brought to Malaysia by British colonial power. They were enslaved and forced to work on plantations growing commercial crops including tea, coffee, rubber, sugarcane, and spices, which provided a significant revenue stream for the British colonial power. Aside from this, the railways and public works departments employed many people. Clerks, dealers, surgeons, teachers, lawyers, and other professions later travelled to the Malay Peninsula in quest of work and better pay. Because the Second World War threatened Burma's timber industry, several went to Malaya to work as indentured labourers on rubber plantations. Anti-Indian riots in Burma were also a factor in their decision to relocate to Malaya.

In this novel, Ghosh explores the family, commercial, and cultural ties that bind dispersed Indian communities in Burma and Malaya to their ancestral motherland. The narrative primarily follows the fortunes of three families: the deposed King of Burma, his attendants, and Dolly, one of them. The royal family of Burma married Rajkumar, a wealthy wood merchant who had formerly been a destitute Bengali orphan in Mandalay, the country's capital. Another family is that of Saya John, a Malayan Christian who served as Rajkumar's mentor during the British invasion of Burma.

One of the main characters in the novel *The Glass Palace* is Rajkumar, who was exiled from India to Burma, while another main character, King Thebaw, the King of Burma, was exiled from Burma to India. Saya John was similarly uprooted from his own country and relocated to Burma. Uma and Dinu, who were also compelled to depart India for America and Malaya, are included in the account. As a result, the novel's characters were in flux and were always on the move. The novel's characters' actions create an environment in which these actions connect the many networks of the Indian diaspora in South East Asia. The characters' motions were both forced and mercantile. The dislocation of Rajkumar, Saya John, and Uma was mercantile, but the banishment of Thebaw - the King of Burma, and some indentured labourers was forced exile.

Rajkumar had to deal with a new kind of double alienation in the shape of a double diaspora: first from India to Burma and then from Burma to Malaya following the anti-Indian racial riots in Burma. He was relocated from Chittagong, his hometown, to Mandalay, Burma's capital. His dislocation was not intentional, but he was destined to be in Mandalay since his father and two other brothers died of a terrible disease. After his father died, he attempted to return to Chittagong with his mother, but she perished on the way. After the loss of his parents and siblings, he was forced to accept work as a Kooli on a ship, and then he moved to Mandalay, where he began his career as a food shop boy. As a result, he was one of the Bengalis who migrated to Burma to seek a better life. Through Rajkumar, we were introduced to Mandalay's Bengali community.

Rajkumar was one of the many Indians who settled in Burma. Rajkumar had no issues as a result of the dislocation. It is uncommon in this field. Rajkumar's life and thoughts were unaffected by his removal from his birthplace. He made a name for himself as a Burmese, not a Bengali. He adopted Burma as his second home, but he was forced to return to Bengal due to racial riots against Indians. During that riot, the Indian diaspora was subjected to a great deal of violence. They only realised they were intruders in Burma when they realised it was not their own country.

Ghosh also depicted forced exile, mercantile and professional migrations, and the British administrative system's indenture labourer and workforce system. The British colonial power forced the King of Burma into exile in Ratnagiri, a small Indian city. The dethroned monarch of Burma was

sentenced to exile in India, and the conquering British's swift evacuation of the king and his pregnant queen from Mandalay to remote Ratnagiri on India's west coast was a wise move. The British colonial authority was quite successful in thoroughly humiliating the Burmese Royal family by exiling them. The Burmese Royal family's exile was also an attempt to erase them from public memory at home. As we can see, the colonial power in Burma even prohibited the use of photographs of the King." The colonial office will not even allow a photograph of the King to be taken for fear that it will be leaked to Burma." (136)

This forcible exile of the Burmese ruler could be compared to the exile of India's final king, Bahadur Shah Zafar. A generation ago, the British colonial force exiled the last Indian ruler to Rangoon. In Ratnagiri, life was certainly not easy for the dethroned King of Burma's family. According to all reports, their money was gone quickly, and they were forced to rely on a meagre British pension. He was handled like a general prisoner by the colonial powers, who defamed him in Burma and abroad. The British had a relatively narrow view of the King, as well as the Burmese, and treated them accordingly, as Percival Spear observes:

The Burmans were arrogant, insular, and ignorant. They had little understanding of the nature of western culture and suffered from megalomania, which is a common side effect of long-term success in confined spaces. (153)

Despite the British portrayal of King Thebaw as a dictator, he was considered a devout and polite man who tried his best to serve his nation. Because of his uprooted situation as a dethroned monarch, he became a powerless victim of colonial power. This helplessness caused him misery and estrangement, for which he withdrew from all worldly pursuits and lost interest in royal issues. He spent most of his time staring at the sea through his binoculars, and he was uninterested in Ratnagiri's life.

The colonial power's politics resulted in the forcible exile of the Burmese royal family. The British colonial force seized Burma and exiled the Burmese royal family to India. The colonial power's objective was to isolate the royal family from his homeland and people. For the same reason, the British colonial power forced Bahadur Shah Zafar, India's last emperor, into exile in Burma. Burma's royal family in forced exile had a significant political and social influence on the country. The populace almost wholly forgot the King and Queen, and they were removed from the country's politics. While being kept hostage in Ratnagiri, an exotic city in India, the king and his family lost their identities.

In Ratnagiri, King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat did everything to preserve and practise Burmese culture. They also tried their hardest to maintain their royal status, but they were unable to do so, and as a result, the elderly princess developed a relationship with their coachman, the currier. The royal family had lost their sense of self and had been pushed to blend into Indian culture and customs. When the British colonial authorities exiled the royal family, they planned.

The British colonial power's goal was crystal evident when the Ratnagiri district commissioner said,

Our teachers don't want political unrest in Burma." They don't want to take any chances because it's their richest province. The Monarch is the only person who has the power to unite the country against them. There are almost a dozen tribes and people living there. They only have one thing in common: monarchy. Our teachers are well aware of this, and they are determined to ensure that the king is forgotten. They don't want to be cruel, and they certainly don't want any martyrs; all they want is for the king to be forgotten. (Ghosh 136)

The displacement has also impacted Malaya's Indian diasporic group of indentured labourers. They made every effort to be culturally connected to their motherland's culture, India. However, they were unable to continue. Their efforts to maintain their bond with their motherland were intense. They had a strong sense of political awareness. They were continually striving to aid the anti-British struggle and free India from colonial rule. They made an effort to assist political activists battling the British. When Uma arrived in Malaya, it was clear that she was welcomed with open arms. They also backed India's anti-British political struggle. India's freedom cause was aided by Indian diasporic populations worldwide. Malaya's Indian diaspora also aided the struggle with their best support, and many revolutionary Indians sought refuge in Malaya to avoid the persecution of British colonial power. However, Indian political parties were uninterested in the battle without a pledge from the British colonial ruler. According to Spear, when the battle broke out, there was popular approval of the cause but widespread unwillingness to do much about it. It was not India's problem but Britain's problem. The ancient slogan "no taxation without representation" was rephrased as

"no popular war effort without accountable government." [...] From what was supposed to be a safe and comfortable seat in the grandstand, India as a whole sat back to watch the huge drama unfold in the European arena. (Spear 376)

Although Indian political organizations were uninterested in the conflict, the diasporic Indian population in Malaya played an essential role since many of them joined Netaji's Indian National Army and battled for India's freedom from British colonial authority throughout WWII. The Indian diaspora in Malaya was broken after WWII, and many members of the Indian community returned to India, while others remained in Malaya. As Rajeshwary points out,

For the period of the Japanese livelihood, a large portion of our Indian community was involved with the Indian Independence League or its military branch, the Indian National Army. As a result, in the early aftermath of the war, the community was anxious about possible British sanctions against the "collaborators." Many League executives were detained by the BMA in late 1945, including the Chairmen of all state branches in Malaya and others who had held key roles in Bose's cabinet. (17)

The Indian diasporic community in Malaya considered the country their home, and some were politically involved in the country. Ilongo Alagappan was the best example of such a person. Who was elected to parliament and held the top position in Malaya's social service? "Things like that count only at home," Ghosh said, "and foreign places are all the same in that they are not home." Even at his highest status in the socio-political arena in Malaya, he ached for his beginnings in India. Nothing attaches you to that place." (Ghosh, *The Circle of Reason* 266)

Burma and Malaya have uprooted Indians' second homes, but the second homes were also dispossessed. It was primarily for the emergence of Burmese patriotic feelings and the riots against Indians in Burma. The disturbance pushed the Indians out of Burma, which had become their second home. There were no racial riots against Indians in Malaya, but the Second World War and the decline of the rubber industry forced them to abandon their second home. It was previously stated that, despite having no direct connection to Indian politics or the cause for Indian independence, rubber plantation labourers participated in the conflict alongside the Indian National Army. The Indian National Army began resisting the British military in the Malayan peninsula by recruiting Malayan plantation labourers. They reclaimed India as their imagined country, and the plantation workers joined the Indian National Army. Although the second and third generations of plantation workers had little contact with their ancestral homeland, India was alive in their collective memory and imagination.

After all, imperialism is a sort of spatial violence in which nearly every square mile of the earth is surveyed, documented, and finally ruled by a single government. The loss of the locale to the

foreigner begins the history of colonial servitude for the native; its geographical identity must then be sought out and restored in some way. The land is only recoverable through the imagination at first because of the presence of the colonial alien (Said 271).

Because they were fighting for a country they had never seen, those troops in the Indian National Army recruited from Malayan plantation labourers have an almost fanatical loyalty to its cause, as seen in *The Glass Palace*. India is the homeland of their forefathers, and it is a divine image to them:

And what did India mean to them? This land for which they were fighting for freedom, a land they'd never seen yet were willing to die for? Formally, India was a sacrament of redemption: a gleaming mountain beyond the horizon, a symbol of freedom in the same way as slavery was a metaphor for plantation. (Ghosh 522)

Like the Indian diasporic community in Burma, the Indian diasporic community in Malaya saw the country as a second home. Most of Burma's Indian diasporic community has made Burma their permanent home. Burma was considered their country of origin by the second generation of the Indian diasporic community in Burma. It became evident when Rajkumar's eldest son, Neel, showed his wife the big temple of Burma and said,

"That is the Shwe Dagon Pagoda," Neel whispered. "We've arrived at our destination." She placed her hand into his and returned her gaze to the filthy river and the gold tower. "Yes," she confirmed. "I have arrived at my destination." (301)

The growth of Burmese nationalistic fervour and riots against the Indian diasporic population in Burma also uprooted the "home" and "second home" in Burma. In *The Glass Palace*, the concept of "home" is one of the most potent metaphors for identification, and the loss of "home" and "second home" indicates the loss of one's identity due to nationalistic movements, racial riots, and the overwhelming Second World War.

Conclusion

Diasporic identities and activities, on the other hand, have various effects on both home and host nations. Many immigrants see themselves as real members of the country's shared identity and socio-political system while residing outside their parents' original countries. Their political devotion may cause host governments to fear the "enemy within" and activist sleeper groups. Such notions can foster prejudice and other varieties of bias. Another concern with communal and strategy implications in host states is whether immigrant integration is hampered by passive or active diasporic attachment. A few claim that migrants who are always gazing "homeward" will never be able to assimilate fully. Others argue that migrants may only gain the confidence they need to integrate themselves by properly keeping strong ethnic and transnational links. When it comes to their country's diasporas, motherlands require transmittals and may be subjected to porching, but they despise excessive political engagement. As a result, several governments permit limited forms of dual nationality while restricting voting and legislative involvement. Diversity within diasporas must be emphasized concerning all of these characteristics of diasporic political effect. "The diaspora" rarely acts as a singular entity regarding lobbying, charitable contributions, or conflict support. Most diasporas include competing groups and dissenting voices, regardless of whether they are based on "ethnolinguistic" or "state-decisive" factors. These, on the other hand, are frequently drowned out by better-organized, networked, and funded groups supporting nationalist or ethnic agendas.

Diasporas vividly encapsulate more extensive transformational processes in nation-states. In today's world, national/ethnic identity, political community, and housing location may not necessarily fit together neatly. Migrants, on the other hand, have a variety of attachments that have been made possible by modern technology. It is unrealistic to expect today's migrants to relocate. Both migrating homelands and host communities shape political identities and behaviours within and within their environments. This is an inexorable trend that governments should consider when making changes to immigration and integration policies.

"The formation of a diaspora could be articulated as the quintessential journey into becoming; a process marked by incessant regroupings, recreations, and reiteration. Together, these stressed actions strive to open up new spaces of discursive and performative postcolonial consciousness" (Enwezor 24).

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